



Senator Feinstein and 13 Senate Colleagues Urge U.S. to Take Leadership Role in Preventing Global Warming

February 16, 2005

Washington, DC – U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) today introduced a bipartisan resolution calling on the United States to participate in international negotiations to actively reduce greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change.

The resolution is cosponsored by Senators Olympia Snowe (R-Me.), John McCain (R-Ariz.), Lincoln Chafee (R-R.I.), Patty Murray (D-Wash.), Jim Jeffords (I-Vt.), Dick Durbin (D-Ill.), Joe Lieberman (D-Conn.), Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), Frank Lautenberg (D-N.J.), Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.), Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.), Daniel Akaka (D-Hawaii) and Jack Reed (D-R.I.).

“The Kyoto Protocol goes into effect today,” said Senator Feinstein. **“More than 140 nations, including all 25 members of the European Union, Russia and China, have ratified the agreement to reduce man-made emissions of greenhouse gases. Of the world’s 38 industrialized countries, only the United States, Australia and Monaco have not ratified the Protocol.”**

“I believe the United States is making a huge mistake and is missing this important opportunity to protect our planet’s environment. Being a responsible steward of the climate is more than just taking steps to pollute less. It also requires participating in international negotiations on the policies the world will need to achieve significant, long-term reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.”

The resolution urges the United States to “demonstrate international leadership and responsibility regarding reducing the health, environmental, and economic risks posed by climate change by:

- (1) carrying out reasonable and responsible actions to ensure significant and meaningful reductions in emissions of all greenhouse gases;
- (2) generating climate-friendly technologies by enacting and implementing policies and programs to address all greenhouse gas emissions to promote sustained economic growth;
- (3) participating in international negotiations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to achieve significant, long-term, cost-effective reductions in global greenhouse gas emissions; and
- (4) supporting the establishment of a long-term objective to prevent the global average temperature from increasing by greater than 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit above preindustrial levels.”

Following is the prepared text of a floor statement by Senator Feinstein:

Mr. President, I rise today to offer a resolution with Senators Snowe, McCain, Chafee, Murray, Jeffords, Durbin, Lieberman, Leahy, Lautenberg Boxer, Cantwell, Akaka and Reed that urges the Administration to participate in international negotiations and actively reduce our greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to global warming.

The Kyoto Protocol goes into effect today. More than 140 nations, including all 25 members of the European Union, Russia and China, have ratified the agreement to reduce man-made emissions of greenhouse gases.

The United States, which accounts for about one-fourth of the greenhouse gases believed responsible for global warming, has refused to ratify the treaty.

Thirty-five of the world's thirty-eight industrialized countries—except for the United States, Australia, and Monaco—have ratified this important treaty.

This means that industrialized nations are bound to cut their combined greenhouse gases by 5 percent below 1990 levels between 2008 and 2012.

The United States is missing an important opportunity to protect our planet's environment by not ratifying the Protocol.

I believe this is a huge mistake.

There is emerging consensus that global warming is real.

According to the National Academy of Sciences, "Since the 1900s global average temperature and atmospheric carbon dioxide concentration have increased dramatically, particularly compared to their levels in the 900 preceding years."

Scientists now agree on three main facts about global warming.

FACT 1: The Earth is warming.

FACT 2: The primary cause of this warming is man-made activities, especially fossil fuel consumption.

FACT 3: If we don't act now to reduce emissions, the problem will only get worse.

We have already begun to see the impacts of climate change:

- Four hurricanes of significant force pounded the state of Florida in a six week period last fall. The storms formed over an area of the ocean where surface temperatures have increased an average of 17 degrees over the past decade.
- Eskimos are being forced inland in Alaska as their native homes on the coastline are melting into the sea.
- Glaciers are beginning to disappear in Glacier National Park in Montana. In 100 years, the Park has gone from having 150 glaciers to fewer than 30. And the 30 that

remain are two-thirds smaller than they once were.

- In California, water supplies are threatened by smaller snowpacks in the Sierra Nevada. Record snowfalls this winter have provided hope for this summer, but the region still could face drought or floods unless temperatures stay cold enough to maintain the snowpack and average snowfall continues for the rest of the precipitation season.

If we take strong action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, there will be 27 percent snowpack remaining in the Sierras at the end of the century.

However, if we do nothing to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, there will only be 11 percent snowpack left in the Sierras at the end of the century.

The San Diego-based Scripps Institution of Oceanography, a preeminent center for marine science research, will release a study later this week showing that global warming will likely have serious ramifications in the very near future, including:

- A water crisis in the western United States in the next 20 years due to smaller snowpacks.
- The disappearance of the glaciers in the Andes in Peru in as little as 10 years, leaving the population without an adequate water supply during the summer.
- The melting of two-thirds of the glaciers in western China by 2050, seriously diminishing the water supply for the region's 300 million inhabitants.

Further, the UN Comprehensive Assessment of Freshwater Resources of the World estimates that by 2025, around 5 billion people, out of a total world population of 8 billion, will not have access to adequate water supplies.

And concern about the effects of climate change is mounting around the world.

Scientists fear that an “ecological catastrophe” is developing in Tibet with the melting of the region's glaciers as a result of global warming.

Glaciers in West Antarctica are thinning twice as fast as they did in the 1990s.

The mean air temperature has risen 4-5 degrees in Alaska in the past three decades causing glaciers to melt and the coastline to recede.

Peru's Quelccaya ice cap, the largest in the tropics, could be gone by 2100 if it continues to melt at its current rate—contracting more than 600 feet a year in some places.

In addition, according to National Geographic, “the famed snows of Kilimanjaro have melted more than 80 percent since 1912. Glaciers in the Garhwal Himalaya in India are retreating so fast that researchers believe that most central and eastern Himalayan glaciers could virtually disappear by 2035. Arctic sea ice has thinned significantly over the past half century, and its extent has declined by about 10 percent in the past 30 years. Greenland's ice sheet is shrinking.”

The Pew Center for Climate Change reports strong evidence of global warming in the United States. The findings included:

- The red fox has shifted its habitat northward, where it is encroaching on the Arctic fox's range.
- Southern, warm-water fish have begun to infiltrate waters off Monterey, California, which were previously dominated by colder-water species.
- The Alaskan tundra, which has for thousands of years been a depository for carbon dioxide, has begun to release more of the gas into the air than it removes because warmer winters are causing stored plant matter to decompose.
- There have been documented trends in which the natural timing of animal or insect life cycles changed and the plants on which they depended did not.
- Many Southern species of butterflies have disappeared entirely over the past century as their range contracted.

According to the International Climate Change Taskforce, of which Senator Snowe is a Co-Chair, if the earth's average temperature increases by more than 2 degrees Celsius (or 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit), the world could face substantial agricultural losses, countless people at risk of water shortages, and widespread adverse health impacts such as malaria.

Even more critically, if the temperature rises more than 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit, we could be at risk for catastrophic weather events. For instance, we would risk losing the West Antarctic and Greenland ice sheets, which could raise sea levels, shut down the Gulf Stream, and destroy the world's forests.

Climate change is real. Its impacts are already being felt. If emissions keep growing at projected levels, greenhouse gases in our atmosphere will reach levels unknown since the time of the dinosaurs during the lifetimes of children born today.

That is why my colleagues and I have introduced this resolution that:

- Urges the Administration to engage in international discussions on post-Kyoto greenhouse gas reductions.
- Calls upon the Administration to take action NOW to reduce emissions domestically.
- Encourages the United States to keep global average temperatures from increasing more than 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit over pre-industrial levels.

As the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gases, it is the responsibility of the United States to lead by example. By not ratifying the Kyoto Protocol, we have sent a harsh message to the world that the largest emitter and contributor to global warming refuses to participate in a worldwide program aimed at reducing greenhouse gases.

But fortunately, even though the federal government has refused to acknowledge global warming, many States have recognized that in spite of the federal government's inaction, action must be taken.

Nearly 40 states have developed their own climate plans.

- An emission trading system is emerging in the Northeast that will require large power plants from Maine to Delaware to reduce their carbon emissions.
- Eighteen states and Washington, DC have enacted renewable portfolio standards. They include Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Texas, and Wisconsin.
- California has enacted legislation that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions from vehicle tailpipes—it is expected that the Northeastern States and Canada will also follow California's lead.

Yet without concerted federal action, the United States will not be able to achieve real, significant greenhouse gas reductions.

As the world's largest greenhouse gas emitter, we must act now to reduce the impacts of climate change and save the environment for future generations.

The Kyoto Protocol ends in 2012. Though the Protocol ends, the United States needs to lead and move to negotiate a post-Kyoto framework. There are many things we can do. For example, we can:

- Use our forests and our farmland as a depository for carbon to prevent it from being released into the atmosphere;
- Develop new technologies such as clean coal, renewable energy, and hydrogen vehicles;
- Make better use of existing technologies such as hybrid vehicles and energy efficient buildings, appliances, and power generation; and,
- Use market-based programs, such as cap and trade, to reduce emissions with the least harm to economy.

Being a responsible steward of the climate is more than just taking steps to pollute less. It also requires participating in international negotiations on the policies the world will need to achieve significant, long-term reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

Thank you Mr. President.

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